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IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY FOR THE FIRST REGIONAL COOPERATION FRAMEWORK FOR EUROPE AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (1997-1999)

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INTRODUCTION

1. The regional cooperation framework (RCF) for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (DP/RCF/REC/1) approved by the Executive Board at its second regular session 1997 was the first for a region that effectively only came into being in the early 1990s. It focuses on issues that will strengthen the human dimension of sustainable development, and envisages a number of regional projects in the following five areas: (a) poverty eradication through the development of sustainable human development policies and indicators through national human development reports; (b) gender equality; (c) governance, focusing on democracy and participatory instruments and external resources management; (d) sustainable livelihoods through the promotion of small- and medium-scale enterprises; and (e) the environment. Poverty eradication will be the all encompassing advocacy theme in each of the above-mentioned areas.

2. In response to Executive Board decision 97/9 of 14 March 1997, the present document describes the means by which the objectives stated in the first RCF are expected to be achieved.

I. LESSONS OF PAST COOPERATION

3. At its thirty-ninth session in May 1992, the Governing Council took note of the third regional programme for Europe (DP/REU/3 and Corr.1). The programme covered Central and Eastern European countries only, and focused on traditional areas: (a) private sector development, (b) environment and energy, and (c) transport and communications.

4. With the incorporation into the programme of 15 newly independent countries and the accompanying opening of country offices after the approval of the programme, in 1994, the then-named Regional Directorate for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States saw the need to review the original selection of regional programme initiatives. The enormity of the changes experienced by the region was such that the regional programme had to be adjusted in terms of its relevance to the region's transition priorities and its linkages to new national programmes. As a result, several of the originally approved projects were either discontinued or not extended, such as the overly ambitious programme on privatization and traditional activities in road transport, communications, and atomic energy. These projects were left to institutions that had a greater affinity for and/or comparative advantage than UNDP had in such areas. The Regional Bureau for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States (RBEC) then shifted its focus to governance, sustainable livelihoods, gender equality and the environment. In addition, as a UNDP pilot experience, RBEC decided in 1994 to promote the preparation of national human development reports throughout the region to help to highlight the social impact of the transition at the country level as well as other crucial development issues.

5. The historic change that took place in the region made most potential lessons of experience from the third regional programme for Europe irrelevant for an RCF covering a totally different region. A new dialogue shifted to unleashing the energies of people, to participatory approaches, good governance,

and gender equality issues, all geared to achieving sustainable human development realities, accompanied by the stated goal of using expertise available within the region through networking between the newly established country offices.

6. The 1996 Office of Evaluation and Strategic Planning (OESP) evaluation, entitled Global, Interregional and Regional Programmes: An Evaluation of Impact, included the evaluation of four RBEC regional projects, namely:

(a) The Mediterranean Environment Technical Assistance Progr (METAP) (RER/90/004), an adjunct to country-based investment programmes ne World Bank and the European Investment Bank. Based in Turkey, and collaborating closely with the Regional Bureau for Arab States and the World Bank, the programme was deemed quite successful, principally through its provision of training in environmental management;

(b) The democracy, governance and participation project (RER/94/001), which, in spite of the lack of familiarity within the region with these concepts, was judged very positively;

(c) The Beijing Express project (RER/95/003), which, according to the evaluation report, was considered "... probably without parallel among all the projects here considered in the kind of enthusiasm it provoked among participants and stakeholders ... in publicizing the importance of action in the area of women's issues and addressing the gender dimension. One result has been far greater support from national Governments for the efforts by UNDP country programmes to establish gender units and programming oriented towards women. The network effect in building linkages among women leaders in many countries in the region may also have longer-term benefits" (p. 58);

(d) The external resources management project (RER/93/005), which was recognized as a project that was well-focused on the needs of all partners in the development cooperation arena.

7. A review of the above-mentioned projects highlighted a number of lessons, which can be summarized as follows:

(a) Areas of focus. RBEC decided to concentrate the limited regional funds in areas that fell under the UNDP mandate and areas of focus, namely: poverty eradication, gender in development, governance, sustainable livelihoods, and the environment. These areas of focus were linked to the attainment of the objectives of United Nations global conferences, particularly the World Summit for Social Development (Copenhagen, 1995), the Fourth World Conference on Women (Beijing, 1995), the United Nations Conference on Human Rights (Vienna, 1992), and the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (Rio de Janeiro, 1992);

(b) Ownership. One lesson learned was the need for strong focal points at the country level through national projects that would serve as catalysts for regional projects. For the first time a concerted effort was made to make use of the expertise available within the region, and to network between country offices;

(c) Capacity-building of regional and subregional institutions. It became apparent that more emphasis needed to be placed on the subject, in part because of lessons learned from other regional projects, especially through the technical cooperation among developing countries (TCDC) modality;

(d) Learning approaches. A particularly effective means of advocating causes and substantive themes was through the organization of regional and subregional workshops on the preparation of national human development reports. The organization of the Beijing Express also provided opportunities to promote policy dialogue and training on key sustainable human development issues;

(e) Links between regional, national and interregional/global programmes. Links between regional and national projects were strong in the areas of gender, small- and medium-scale enterprises, democracy, external resources mobilization, and national human development reports, while those with projects financed under the interregional and global programme were weak;

(f) Collaboration with United Nations organizations, regional commissions and others. Particularly strong links were established with the Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) in a project for the development of social-sector statistics, and with the United Nations Industrial Development Organization on small- and medium-scale enterprises. The United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) played an important role in serving as implementing agency for some of the regional projects.

8. These lessons, together with the overall positive synergy generated by working with ECE, became inputs in the formulation of the current RCF, together with extensive discussions with national authorities, including through several regional workshops, and UNDP resident representatives in the region.

II. IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGY AND ARRANGEMENTS

A. Common elements in the design and implementation of the components of the regional programme

9. The current RCF is based on a consultative process with all the countries involved, resulting in a number of basic principles, as follows:

(a) Regional projects will focus on countries that have national projects with thematic areas of focus similar to those of UNDP;

(b) Through networking, TCDC will become an operational reality, building on existing national projects, with thematic activities supported by appropriate RBEC regional advocacy projects. Each regional project will have an international project manager, who will mobilize expertise from within the region and network with non-core funding sources to channel additional resources towards national priorities;

(c) Human development is the over-arching paradigm that binds the five thematic areas into a holistic approach and adds synergy to the regional programme. National human development reports are the vehicles for developing

the focus within the focus. Each year RBEC recommends a theme to be elaborated through these national reports;

(d) Decentralized management is the key characteristic of the RCF. By locating all of its seven regional projects in one common duty station, the RBEC Regional Support Centre in Bratislava, Slovakia, the managers of the regional projects are now closer to their national clients and also benefit from the synergy of being together and economies in terms of travel time and costs. To enhance impact and coordination between regional projects, regional programme synergy meetings will take place every three months in Bratislava, where national stakeholders and international development partners will be invited on the basis of need;

(e) Capacity-building in design and management tools will be one of the tasks of each regional project, through corresponding national projects, and counterparts;

(f) Each regional project will develop its potential to build up a database of knowledge and experience in its field of competence that will be available to other countries as well as development cooperation partners. Thus the Regional Support Centre in Bratislava will become a service centre for the region;

(g) Each regional project will have a built-in flexible response capacity to deal with the needs that may arise during the programming cycle, relying on a vast network of expertise covering the entire region;

(h) Governments wishing to benefit from regional projects will be required to establish a national project in order to ensure national absorptive capacity for regional inputs. Links with interregional and global programmes and projects will also be explored, to avoid parallel and uncoordinated initiatives. Opportunities for linkages, including in implementation, exist on a number of levels in each of the five priority areas of the RCF.

B. Implementation strategy for each thematic area of the regional programme

10. In light of decision 97/9, each thematic area and regional project will be reviewed below in terms of: (a) objectives; (b) implementation strategy; and (c) expected results and success criteria.

1. Poverty eradication

11. The RCF includes two projects in this thematic area, namely, a project on human development policies and statistics and a Regional Poverty Programme.

Human development policies and statistics project (RER/97/003 (UNDP contribution of $2,100,000, May 1997-December 1999)

Objectives

12. The objectives of this project are to help to formulate sound human development policies through: (a) the preparation of national human development reports, combined with an annual regional human development report; and (b) the development of improved statistics on human development indicators, including reports on social trends by countries, the latter in close cooperation with ECE.

Implementation strategy

13. Subregional workshops will bring together specialists responsible for national human development reports and from the national statistical offices. A number of missions to countries in the region will be organized to address specific issues to advance the preparation of national human development reports and to promote in-country policy dialogue as a basis for future policy reform and international cooperation.

Expected results and success criteria

14. The project will be considered successful if: (a) the national human development reports have contributed to promoting greater awareness of human development issues and national debate on them; (b) national data collection and analysis capacity has been strengthened; and (c) policy and operational measures are adopted to address priority human development issues.

Regional Poverty Programme (RER/96/010) (UNDP contribution of $1,900,000, January 1997-December 1999)

Objectives

15. The objectives of the project are to: (a) suggest policy options to Governments for addressing poverty; (b) develop frameworks for UNDP-supported country-level activities related to poverty; (c) strengthen institutional capacity within the region to formulate poverty policies in a market economy; (d) build a network of institutions that share information and knowledge about poverty interventions in the region; and (e) involve civil society institutions in creating awareness of poverty policy options and the implications of choices made.

Implementation strategy

16. Efforts will be made to bring together policy makers of the region with analysts engaged in applied comparative analysis in order to build up domestic capacity to make appropriate anti-poverty policies, involving civil society and the media to facilitate national discussion. Regional poverty workshops, national poverty workshops, and the preparation of technical papers on specific poverty-related issues that characterize the region, in close coordination with the World Bank, related regional projects, and UNDP global projects, will be the vehicles by which the strategy will be implemented.

Expected results and success criteria

17. By the end of the project, support will have been provided for the formulation of national poverty programmes and specific project interventions targeting the poor in selected countries, including measures that examine the equity dimension of policy change, particularly as it relates to women. In addition, the project will have contributed to building up a global network of institutions working on poverty issues, with linkages to UNDP country offices.

2. Gender equality

Gender equality project (RER/97/002) (UNDP contribution of $2,500,000, complemented by a possible global Gender-in-Development Programme contribution of $400,000, May 1997-December 1999)

Objectives

18. The objectives of this project are to achieve the goals of the Beijing Platform for Action by: (a) raising awareness about the economic and social benefits of gender equality; (b) promoting the consideration of gender-related issues in the formulation of national development policies; promoting equality in the areas of women's rights and of the number of women in economic and political decision-making positions; and (c) promoting efforts to combat violence against women.

Implementation strategy

19. The project has a unique focus in combining three lines of action at country level: (a) encouraging the formation of national gender-in-development units located in the government hierarchy so that they can have an influence on policy development and the capacity to serve as women's information centres on women's rights; (b) promoting in-country non-governmental organization (NGO) gender-networking; and (c) supporting in-country gender analysis by contracting national research institutes, among others, which can provide the academic underpinning for promoting gender-sensitive parliamentary initiatives, as well as the preparation of an annual report on the status of women. Two subregional gender project managers, based in Bratislava and Tashkent, have been appointed to serve the Eastern European and Central Asian subregions, with substantive backstopping from the RBEC Gender Programme Specialist based in New York. The preparation of gender-related information for inclusion in national human development reports will also be supported. Complementary funds are expected from the UNDP global Gender-in-Development Programme, and from the United Nations Development Fund for Women, which has also offered support as cooperating agency.

Expected results and success criteria

20. Expected results and successful criteria include: (a) functional gender-development units will have been established in each of the 27 countries participating in the regional programme; (b) databases on national and regional gender-in-development activities will have been set up; (c) networks will have

been established between non-governmental organizations and gender-in-development units; and (d) institutions involved in gender-related research and training will have been provided with results that may have an impact on national gender-related issues. Greater overall awareness of gender-related issues and relevant policy and operational decisions to address them will be of critical importance.

3. Governance

Democracy, governance and participation project (RER/96/009), (UNDP contribution of $1,900,000, August 1997-December 1999)

Objectives

21. The project aims to focus on promoting good governance, through assistance to parliaments and ombudsman-type institutions, reaching out to civil society's capacity to participate and strengthening audit and evaluation capacities. United Nations work in the area of HIV/AIDS will also be managed under this project, coordinating RBEC inputs with those of additional donors.

Implementation strategy

22. At the regional level, information will be gathered and disseminated through networks and the organization of a regional database on development cooperation related to democracy. A Democracy Governance and Participation Steering Committee has been established to facilitate implementation, which will involve the allocation of regional responsibilities to national institutions. Implementation partners include: (a) the Academy of Education of Slovakia, (b) the Institute of Sociology of the Czech Academy of Science, to carry out research and development functions; and (c) the institute responsible for the Ombudsman function in Poland. Several of the thematic components will be further decentralized to country offices and United Nations cooperating agencies, including the United Nations Centre for Human Rights (UNHCR) and the Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice Division of the United Nations Office in Vienna, in conjunction with the European Institute for Crime Prevention and Control.

Expected results and success criteria

23. By the end of the programme, it is envisaged that each participating country will have organized a comprehensive democracy, governance and participation data base and will have assisted in providing support to country-level activities related to its objectives. Ombudsman's offices will have been established or strengthened in participating countries and legislation will have been prepared on governance issues. State audit offices will have been strengthened, and the Joint United Nations HIV/AIDS Programme will have supported a number of HIV/AIDS control and prevention programmes. Success will be measured by the completion of agreed work plans at the country level, as well as the number of policy decisions taken to address issues raised by the project, and, where appropriate, the practical measures taken.

External resources management project, phase II (RER/97/004), (UNDP contribution of $1,800,000, July 1997-December 1999)

Objectives

24. The objectives of this project are to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of external resource flows to participating countries through improved management, by building the capacity of national officials in relation to: (a) the criteria and procedures of main donors; (b) financial management of external resource flows; and (c) programme and project monitoring and evaluation instruments.

Implementation strategy

25. Training workshops for government officials, distribution of training materials, and learning from the experience of other countries in external resources management through the technical cooperation among countries in transition and TCDC modalities are the main features of the implementation strategy. In addition, the project will make use of the donor assistance database developed under the democracy, governance and participation project (RER/96/009) as well as the G-7 Support Implementation Group.

Expected results and success criteria

26. By the end of the project, it is envisaged that the national departments responsible for external resources management and aid coordination will possess fully computerized databases on aid flows, including, where appropriate, adoption of the G-7 donor assistance database system. In addition, staff will be fully familiar with donor procedures and be able to expedite current business with donors. In addition, skills in project design, appraisal, monitoring and evaluation will have been enhanced, and systems will have been established within technical departments for these functions. Practices will also have been put in place, where needed, for regular donor meetings and sectoral consultations, to facilitate donor coordination and the exchange of experience.

4. Sustainable livelihoods

Small- and medium-scale enterprises project (RER/97/005) (UNDP contribution of $2,600,000, April 1997-December 1999)

Objectives and expected impact

27. The objective of this project is to promote and strengthen small- and medium-scale enterprises as a means of creating employment and reducing poverty, with special attention to the participation of female entrepreneurs, in cooperation with the gender equality project (RER/97/002). The project will thus develop new and ongoing activities to support small- and medium-scale enterprises in six related areas: (a) national small- and medium-scale enterprise projects; (b) national business support centres/incubators; (c) support for the participation of women in business; (d) restructuring of privatized small- and medium-scale enterprises; (e) creation of an enabling

environment for small- and medium-scale enterprise development; and (f) establishment and organization of credit/financing mechanisms for micro-enterprises.

Implementation strategy

28. The regional project will support national projects and networks, focusing primarily on 10 countries in the Balkans, the Caucasus and Central Asia. It will take advantage of the successful experience of the former small- and medium-scale enterprise project in Romania, through the use of business advisers trained by the project, business books, manuals and training materials produced through the project, and linkages established with other organizations specializing in reaching out to regional entrepreneurs.

Expected results and success criteria

29. By the end of the project, national counterpart institutions and projects will have been established in 10 countries, and national business advisers will have been trained and will be able to assist in the preparation of business plans, mobilizing credit, restructuring management and marketing. Success criteria will be measured in terms of the number and quality of business plans prepared and implemented, an increase in the number of viable and profitable small- and medium-scale enterprises and people employed, and a continuous rise in the levels of investments recorded.

5. Environment

Environment and development project (RER/97/001), (UNDP contribution of $2,000,000 and Capacity 21 contribution of $727,273, August 1997-December 1999)

Objectives

30. The objectives of this project are to promote country-specific projects that will strengthen national capacities in the areas of: (a) formulating and/or updating Agenda 21 objectives; (b) policy reform and environmental legislation; (c) integrating environmental considerations into business and economic decisions; (d) enhancing public participation in environmental planning and monitoring; and (e) information and resource mobilization.

Implementation strategy

31. The project is designed as a framework to assist countries with their own priorities and stages of environment policy development, including the formulation of national environmental policies. Special attention will be given to subregional priority areas, including the Aral Sea (with Capacity 21), and the Barents Sea. Links will also be developed with the ongoing and future Global Environment Facility (GEF) regional projects under the international waters component, relating to the Danube River (pollution reduction and environmental management), the Black Sea (strategic action plan and environmental management), the Dnieper River Basin (strategic action programme), and the Caspian Sea (Caspian Sea Environment Programme). Links will also be

established with national and regional projects to be financed under the Montreal Protocol relating to ozone depletion, as well as GEF national projects relating to climate change, biodiversity and ozone depletion, and energy efficiency (with ECE support).

Expected results and success criteria

32. By the end of the project, national environmental authorities will have been assisted in producing or updating national Agenda 21 programmes, preparing legislation and policy options relating to the environment, training environmental specialists in the public and private sectors, and designing projects that can attract resources.

III. MANAGEMENT ARRANGEMENTS, MONITORING AND EVALUATION

33. In addition to the regional programme initiatives outlined above, the RBEC Regional Support Centre also includes the one subregional resource facility (SURF) allocated to the region in the 1998-1999 budget. RBEC has decided to assign to the two SURF professionals the thematic responsibilities of governance and the environment, thus strengthening and supporting the focus of two RBEC regional initiatives. Furthermore, to promote follow-up to the networking between similar national project initiatives, an essential part of the synergy promoted by the regional programme as a whole, the regional programme will support subregional initiatives within the five thematic programme focus areas. Through its support programme, called "Agora", from the Greek for "meeting place" (RER/97/005), new TCDC initiatives within the region will be sought, enhanced and strengthened, thus providing the logical complement to the management of the regional programme and an ideal conduit for TCDC, including seeking synergy between regions, such as with Asia and Latin America.

34. All regional projects are managed by the RBEC Regional Support Centre in Bratislava, Slovakia. RBEC policy guidelines will be communicated through regional programmes synergy meetings held every three months in New York. Day-to-day support for monitoring has been decentralized to the senior management of the Regional Support Centre. For each regional project, a comprehensive 20- to 40-page long project document will be prepared, conforming to the requirements of the UNDP Programme and Projects Manual and the required project design features. To become operational, each regional project must be reviewed and endorsed by a significant number of countries in the region, which must accept their obligations as stipulated in the regional project documents.

35. Managers of each project must develop specific performance indicators as part of their annual work plan, to be fine-tuned in a system of three-monthly rolling implementation plans, endorsed by the above-mentioned regional programme synergy meetings.

36. Quarterly progress reports on each project will be submitted as inputs to the synergy meetings. These project reports will be combined into one annual progress report.

37. The RCF will be subject to a review in 1999. All regional projects included under the RCF will be evaluated upon completion. The issues to be addressed as well as the timing of these evaluations will be determined by the Programme Management Oversight Committee in consultation with RBEC and the Evaluation Office.

IV. EXECUTIVE BOARD ACTION

38. The Executive Board may wish to:

Approve the implementation strategy for the first regional cooperation framework for Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States as contained in document DP/1998/9.

Annex

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND ALLOCATION TARGET TABLE FOR EUROPE AND THE COMMONWEALTH OF INDEPENDENT STATES (1997-1999)

(In thousands of United States dollars)

Regional cooperation framework programme areas	Resource allocation	
	Core	Non-core
1. Poverty eradication	4 000	
2. Gender equality	2 500	
3. Governance	3 700	1 500*
4. Sustainable livelihoods	2 600	
5. Environment	2 000	727 (Capacity 21)
TOTAL	14 800	2 227

* Cost sharing at the time of preparation of the present document from the Governments of Sweden, Switzerland and the Czech Republic (RER/96/009), and from the Austrian Trust Fund (RER/97/004).